wholly defenceless—as no attempt would be made to defend it—in the event of a summons, it would be surrendered upon the usual terms, and that these would necessarily ensure the safety of non-combatants and protect their property.

But, in truth, there was no small portion of the inhabitants who denied or doubted, almost to the last moment, that the enemy contemplated any serious demonstration upon the city They assumed—and this idea was tacitly encouraged, if not believed, by the authorities, military and civil—that the movement on Columbia was but a feint, and that the bulk of Sherman's army was preparing for a descent upon Charleston. This also seemed to be the opinion in Charleston itself. It was understood, or so reported, in Columbia, that the force pressing upon our troops in this direction consisted of but 6,000 men, while, to oppose them, we had 7,000.

VI.

All these conjectures were speedily set at rest, when, on the 13th February, (Monday,) the enemy was reported to have reached a point in Lexington District, some ten miles above Jeffcoat's. On the 14th, their progress brought them to Thom's Creek, the stream next below Congaree Creek, and about twelve miles below the city. Here our troops, consisting of the mounted gunmen of Hampton, Wheeler, Butler, &c., made stubborn head against them, holding them in check by constant skirmishing. This skirmishing continued throughout Wednesday, but failed to arrest the enemy's progress; and as their cannon continued momently to sound more heavily upon our ears, we were but too certainly assured of the hopelessness of the struggle. The odds of force against us were too vast for any valor or generalship to make head against it; and yet, almost to this moment, the hope was held out to the people, in many quarters, that the city could be saved. It was asserted that the corps of Cheatham and Stewart were making forced marches, with the view to a junction with the troops under Beauregard, and, such was the spirit of our troops, and one of the generals at least, that almost at the moment when Sherman's advance was entering the town, Hampton's cavalry was in order of battle, and only waiting the command to charge it. But the horrors of a street fight in a defenceless city, filled with women and children, were prudently avoided; and our gallant troops were drawn off from the scene at the very hour when the enemy were entering upon it. But we anticipate.

VII.

Whatever hopes might have been entertained of the ultimate success of our defences, they were all dissipated, when, by daylight, on the 16th, (Thursday,) our troops re-entered the city, burning the several bridges over the Congaree, the Broad and Saluda Rivers. They were quartered through the day about the several streets, and along their several bivouacs they dug slight excavations in the earth, as for rifle pits and for protection from the enemy's shells, which fell fast and thick about the town. They had commenced shelling the evening before, and continued it throughout the night. No summons for surrender had been made; no warning of any kind was given. The shelling continued throughout the day, and new batteries were in rapid progress of erection on the West side of the Congaree, the more effectually to press the work of destruction. The damage was comparatively slight. The new capitol building was struck five times, but suffered little or no injury. Numerous shells fell into the inhabited portions of the town, yet we hear of only two persons killed—one on the hospital square, and another near the South Carolina Railroad Depot. The venerable Mr. S. J. Wagner, from Charleston, an aged citizen of near eighty, narrowly escaped with life, a shell bursting at his feet. His face was excoriated by the fragments, and for awhile his eye-sight was lost; but we are happy to state that the hurts were slight, and he is now as well as ever.

On Wednesday, the 15th, the city was placed under martial law, and the authority confided to Gen. E. M. Law. With characteristic energy, this officer executed his trusts, and was employed day and night in the maintenance of order. This, with some few exceptions, was surprisingly maintained. It was indeed wonderful that, with so many soldiers in town, with so much confusion among the people, there should have been so little disorder. There was some riotous conduct after night. Some highway robberies were committed, and some few stores broken open and robbed. But, beyond these instances, there were but few instances of crime, and none of insubordination. Terrible, meanwhile, was the press, the shock, the rush, the hurry, the universal confusion—such as might naturally be looked for, in the circumstances of the city from which thousands were preparing to fly, without previous preparations for flight—burdened with pale and trembling women, their children and portable chattels—trunks and jewels, family Bibles and the *lares familiares*. The railroad depot for Charlotte was crowded with anxious waiters upon the train—with a wilderness of luggage—millions, perhaps, in value—much of which was left finally and lost. Throughout Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, these scenes of struggle were in constant performance. The citizens fared badly. The Governments of the State and of the Confederacy absorbed all the modes of conveyance. Transportation about the city could not be had, save by a rich or favored few. No love could persuade where money failed to convince, and SELF, growing bloated in its dimensions, stared one from every hurrying aspect, as you traversed the excited and crowded streets. In numerous instances, those who succeeded in getting away did so at the cost of trunks and luggage; and, under what discomforts they departed, no one who did not see can readily conceive.

VIII.

The end was rapidly approaching. The enemy's thunders were resounding at the gates. Defence was impossible. At a late hour on Thursday night, the Governor, with his suite and a large train of officials, departed. The army began its evacuation, and by daylight few remained who were not resigned to the necessity of seeing the tragedy played out. After all the depletion, the city contained, according to our estimate, at least 20,000 inhabitants, the larger proportion being females and children and negroes. Hampton's cavalry, as we have already mentioned, lingered till near 10 o'clock the next day, and scattered groups of Wheeler's command hovered about the enemy at their entrance into the town.

The inhabitants were startled at daylight, on Friday morning, by a heavy explosion. This was the South Carolina Railroad Depot. It was accidentally blown up. Broken open by a band of plunderers, mostly low persons, among whom were many females and negroes, their reckless greed precipitated their fate. This building had been made the receptacle of supplies from sundry quarters, and was crowded with stores of merchants and planters, trunks of treasure, innumerable wares and goods of fugitives—all of great value. It appears that, among its contents, were some kegs of powder. The robbers paid, and suddenly, the penalties of their crime. Using their lights freely and hurriedly, the better to *pick*, as they stole, they fired a train of powder leading to the kegs. The explosion followed, and the number of persons destroyed is variously estimated, from seventeen to fifty. It is probable that not more than thirty-five suffered, but the actual number perishing is, to this moment, unascertained.

At an early hour on Friday, the commissary and quartermaster stores were thrown wide, the contents cast out into the streets and given to the people. The negroes especially loaded themselves with plunder. All this might have been saved, had the officers been duly warned by the military authorities of the probable issue of the struggle. Wheeler's cavalry also shared largely of this plunder, and several of them might be seen, even to the hour of the enemy's arrival, bearing off huge bales upon their saddles.

It was proposed that the white flag should be displayed from the tower of the City Hall. But Gen. Hampton, whose command had not yet left the city, and who was still eager to do battle in its defence, indignantly declared that if displayed, he should have it torn down. Up to this moment, his resolve was to fight the enemy in the streets, and, anxious to the last to try the effect of a charge upon the enemy's advance, he slowly retired from the city.

The following letter from the Mayor to Gen. Sherman was the initiation of the surrender:

MAYOR'S OFFICE,
COLUMBIA, S. C., February 17, 1865.

To MAJOR-GENERAL SHERMAN: The Confede-